

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W
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O R 181714Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 807
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY BLIN
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
KEMBASSY THE HAGUE 8155
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
USMISSION OECD PARIS
USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 2923

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: UK, PINT
SUBJ: THE NEXT FOREIGN SECRETARY

SUMMARY. IT APPEARS THAT THE NEXT FOREIGN SECRETARY IS
LIKELY TO BE PETER SHORE OR MARLYN REES. END SUMMARY.

CALLAGHAN HAS ALREADY DECIDED WHO HE WILL APPOINT TO
SUCCEED TONY CROSLAND AS FOREIGN SECRETARY AND WILL
PROBABLY ANNOUNCE HIS DECISION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS
NEXT TUESDAY (FEBRUARY 22). HE OFFERED THE JOB TO
DENIS HEALEY, BUT HEALEY DECIDED TO STAY ON AS CHANCELLOR.
THE PRIME MINISTER THEN WEIGHED WHETHER TO BRING FORWARD
A "YOUNG LOCHINVAR" (E.G., DAVID OWEN, 39-YEAR OLD
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MINISTER OF STATE AT THE FCO) OR WHETHER TO STICK WITH
ONE OF THE OLDER POLITICAL VETERANS ALREADY IN CABINET.
HE FINALLY OPTED FOR THE LATTER COURSE, AND THEN
REPORTEDLY NARROWED HIS CHOICE TO PETER SHORE OR MERLYN
REES.

2. CROSLAND REMAINS IN A COMA AND HIS CONDITION IS AGAIN

DETERIORATING. IF HE IS STILL ALIVE ON MONDAY, CALLAGHAN WILL MAKE PUBLIC A LETTER FROM MRS. CROSLAND SAYING T N T SHE IS SURE IT WOULD BE CROSLAND'S WISH THAT HIS IMPORTANT OFFICE OF STATE NOT BE KEPT VACANT. THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD THEN ANNOUNCE THE NAME OF HIS SUCCESSOR ON TUESDAY.

3. COMMENT: IT MUST HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT FOR HEALEY TO PASS UP THIS OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME FOREIGN SECRETARY, AN AMBITION HE HAS LONG CHERISHED. HE REPORTEDLY DECIDED TO STAY AT HIS POST NOT LEAST IN ORDER TO COMBAT SIR JOHN HUNT'S IDEAS FOR SPLITTING THE TREASURY. HEALEY IS THUS CONDEMNED IN ALL PROBABILITY TO REMAIN WHERE HE IS UNTIL THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION, HIS POLITICAL FORTUNES STAKED TO AN UPTURN IN BRITAIN'S ECONOMIC PROSPECTS. IF LABOR THEN WON THAT ELECTION, HE WOULD BE WELL PLACED TO SUCCEED CALLAGHAN WHEN THE LATTER STEPS DOWN AS PRIME MINISTER.

4. AS TO THE TWO PUTATIVE CANDIDATES FOR THE FOREIGN SECRETARYSPHP, WE SHALL RESERVE OUR COMMENTS UNTIL WE SEE HOW WELL INFORMED OUR SOURCES PROVE. AT DVRST BLACH, HOWEVER, IT WOULD SEEM THAT PETER SHORE HAS ONE DISTINCT HANDICAP -- HE HATES FOREIGNERS. EUROPEANS, IN PARTICULAR, WOULD FIND IT DISTASTEFUL TO DEAL WITH THIS MAN WHO WAS THE SCOURGE OF THE PRO-MARKETEERS DURING THDKBITTER BATTLES THAT WRACKED THE LABOR PARTY UP O THE EC REFERENDUM.

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5. REES, ON THE OTHER HAND,DID NOT FIGURE PROMINENTLY ONE WAY OR THE OTHER IN THAT STRUGGLE. HE HAS LOND BEEN A CALLAGHAN PROTEGE AND IS CREDITED WITH HAVING DONE A GOOD JOB IN NORTHERN IRELAND BEFORE MOVING TO HIS PRESENT PGNITION AS HOME SECRETARY. HE IS WELL AND FAVORABLY KNOWN TO THIS EMBASSY, AND IS WELL-DISPOSED TOWARDS THE UNITED STWES.

ARMSTRONG

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